

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 031403Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2930
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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
DIA
SECDEF
USCINCEUR
USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 2816

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN MEDIA SUMMARY FOR MAY 3, 1977

1. MEDIA BEGAN BUILD-UP FOR ASAD'S FORTHCOMING MEETING WITH CARTER IN CAMPAIGN DESIGNED TO DERIVE MAXIMUM DOMESTIC POLITICAL GAINS FROM ASAD'S SUMMITRY WITH LEADERS OF GREAT POWERS. THAWRA BANNERED: "GENEVA ENCOUNTER IS FIRST MEETING BY CARTER WITH AREA'S LEADERS OUTSIDE THE U.S. AND WILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS." WHILE TISHRIIN HEADLINED: "ASAD-CARTER MEETING DRAWS ATTENTION OF WORLD INFORMATION MEDIA. LARGE MEDIA GROUP HEADS FOR GENEVA TO COVER THE EVENT." ACCOMPANYING ARTICLES CARRIED EXCLUSIVE
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DESPATCHES FROM NEW YORK AND GENEVA RESPECTIVELY IN WHICH UNNAMED SOURCES PREDICTED THAT DIRECTION OF U.S. "SOLUTION" TO CRISIS WOULD CRYSTALLIZE AFTER ADMINISTRATION FINISHES ITS CONSULTATIONS. TISHRIIN CITED ASAD PRESS CONFERENCE ON OCCASION VISIT UK'S OWEN IN WHICH PRES. CLAIMED HE ENCOURAGED BY CARTER'S "ADHERENCE TO MORAL PRINCIPLES." POLITICAL CIRCLES IN GENEVA SAID TO EXPECT

THE CARTER-ASAD MEETING WOULD CLARIFY U.S. THINKING ON ELEMENTS OF SOLUTION AND THAT CARTER WOULD HAVE TO EXPLAIN TO ASAD WHAT HE MEANT WHEN HE SPOKE ABOUT A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND AS WELL AS ADDRESS HIMSELF TO QUESTIONS OF BROTHERS AND PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AT GENEVA. SAME SOURCES CLAIMED SYRIAN SIDE SHOWING FLEXIBILITY BUT "WAS NOT DISPOSED TO BARGAIN OVER TWO MATTERS"--PALESTINIAN RIGHTS AND FULL WITHDRAWAL.

2. IRAQ. ON MAY 2-3 CRITICISM OF IRAQ APPEARED IN MEDIA FOR FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL WEEKS. (SEE SEPTTEL).

3. NUCLEAR WEAPONS. SYRIAN PRESS CONTINUED ITS COMMENTARY ON ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR POTENTIAL, MAKING FOLLOWING POINTS:

--RECENT STORIES ON DIVERSION OF URANIUM AND ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR POTENTIAL AIMED AT PRESSURING ARABS AND WEAKENING THEIR NEGOTIATING POSITION.

--ASAD TOLD BRITISH JOURNALISTS THAT "IF ISRAEL OBTAINS ATOMIC WEAPONS, WE WILL."

--ISRAEL WARNED AGAINST "PLAYING WITH FIRE."

--ARABS WILL NOT BE INTIMATED.

4. LEBANON. SEVERAL EDITORIALS FOCUSED ON INCIDENT "AIMED AT DISRUPTION" OF PEACE IN LEBANON AND WARNED THAT SYRIA WOULD CONTINUE BACKING THE LEGITIMATE UNCLASSIFIED

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LEBANESE AUTHORITY (SARKIS). EDITORIALS DISMISSED "THOSE WHO THINK THEY ABLE OF APPLYING PRESSURE UPON THE LEBANESE ADMINISTRATION OR UPON THE ADF" AS BETTING ON LOSING HAND "SINCE THEY CANNOT ADMIT TO THEIR WEAK RESOURCES AND INEFFECTIVENESS."

5. ISRAEL SETTLEMENTS AND THE PEACE PROCESS. IN EDITORIAL ENTITLED, "THE PEACE MARCH AND THE SETTLEMENT MARCH." UNNAMED COLUMNIST SAW ISRAEL EXPLOITING TALK OF PEACE IN EFFORT TO MASK EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH MORE SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED TERRITORY. HE SAW SETTLEMENTS AS BASED ON ISRAELI DESIRE FOR EXPANSION USING SUCH SETTLEMENTS AS "MILITARY SUPPORT POINTS" (ALLUSION TO ALLON PLAN). HE ASSERTED SUCH SETTLEMENTS HAD NO ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR ISRAEL SINCE COUNTRY COULD NOT AFFORD TO SUPPORT THEM GIVEN ITS "ECONOMIC CRISIS" AND THE SHARP DROP IN IMMIGRANTS. HE CONCLUDED THAT ARABS COULD THWART SUCH THESE ACTS BY VARIOUS MEASURES INCLUDING THREAT TO BOYCOTT PEACE PROCESS.
MURPHY

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